Papua New Guinean Sign Language

"Sign language" was made the fourth official language of Papua New Guinea in 2015. In practice, this means the local form of sign language then being developed and standardized (**Papua New Guinean Sign Language**, or "PNGSL").[3][4]

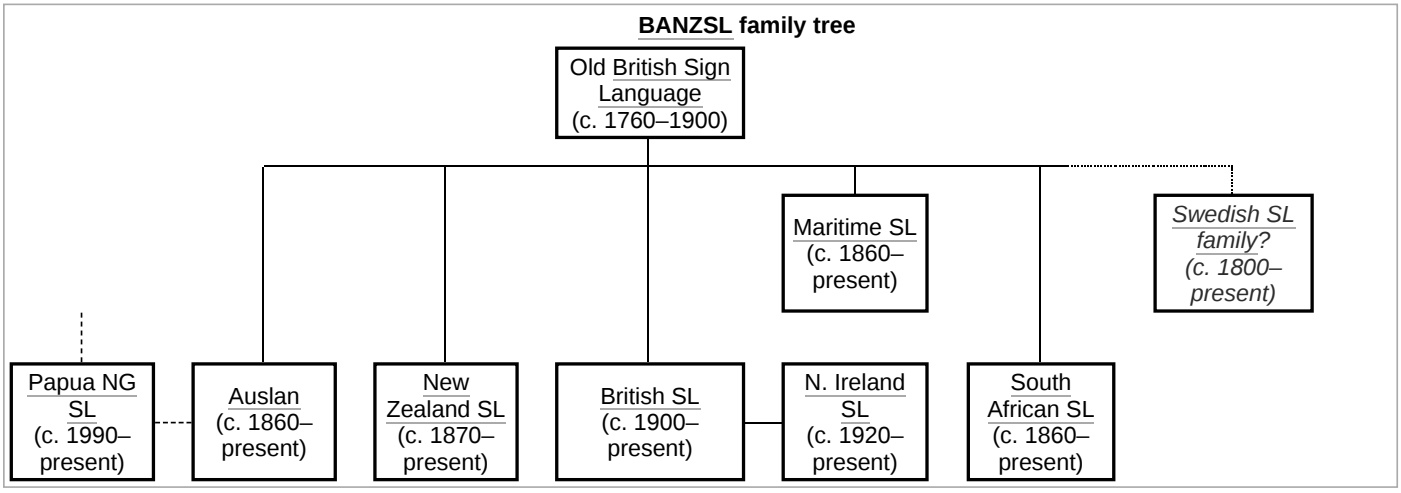
The language has been called "Melanesian Sign Language". However, this does not translate what the community calls it, and is misleading because it is not used elsewhere in Melanesia.[1]

Papua New Guinean Sign Language	
PNGSL	
Native to	Papua New Guinea
Native speakers	30,000 (2015)[1]
Language family	indigenous–Auslan creole ▪ **Papua New Guinean Sign Language**
Official status	
Official language in	Papua New Guinea
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	pgz
Glottolog	papu1255 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/papu1255)[2]

Location

It is unknown to what extent and where PNGSL is used in Papua New Guinea. However, tests so far have found that speakers from different areas of PNG have been able to communicate with each other, though there is great regional variation due to the influence of home sign. Many children learning PNGSL were raised by deaf parents using home sign, and these children have markedly influenced the language at deaf gatherings.[1]

History


BANZSL family tree
Old British Sign Language (c. 1760–1900)
Maritime SL (c. 1860–present)
Swedish SL family? (c. 1800–present)
Papua NG SL (c. 1990–present)
Auslan (c. 1860–present)
New Zealand SL (c. 1870–present)
British SL (c. 1900–present)
N. Ireland SL (c. 1920–present)
South African SL (c. 1860–present)

Auslan (Australian Sign Language) was introduced to Papua New Guinea in the 1990s.[3] There was influence from Tok Pisin and more importantly mixture with local or home sign, as the languages diverged to the point where, by 2015, it was estimated that they were only about 50% mutually intelligible and that native speakers of Auslan and PNGSL were not able to understand one another.[1]

By the time sign language was made official, PNGSL was being used as the language of instruction in deaf schools and deaf units within hearing schools. Books purported to be of PNGSL up to this point were actually of Auslan. The first book of actual PNGSL is expected to be published in 2016.[1]

A separate, local sign language in Enga province has been described.[5]

References

1. ISO request part 1 (http://www-01.sil.org/iso639-3/cr_files/2015-066.pdf)
ISO request part 2 (http://www-01.sil.org/iso639-3/cr_files/2015-066_pgz.pdf)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Papua New Guinean Sign Language" (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/papu1255). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.

3. Radio Australia report (http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/international/radio/program/pacific-beat/sign-language-becomes-fourth-official-language-of-papua-new-guinea/1451176)
4. EMTV report (http://www.emtv.com.pg/article.aspx?slug=Sign-Language-Next-Official-Language-for-PNG&subcategory=Top-Stories) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20160304202605/http://www.emtv.com.pg/article.aspx?slug=Sign-Language-Next-Official-Language-for-PNG&subcategory=Top-Stories) 2016-03-04 at the Wayback Machine
5. Kendon, Adam. "A description of a deaf-mute sign language from the Enga Province of Papua New Guinea with some comparative discussion." *Semiotica* 32.1-2 (1980): 81-118.

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